

Transforming the Health of South Seattle and South King County

Monthly newsletter

2013 Summer Edition

In this issue

[Welcome to Health Equity](#)

[Community Transformation Grant](#)

[Equity works](#)

[Highlights from the field](#)

[A look at life expectancies in South King County](#)

[Links](#)

[About CTG](#)

[Spotlight on best practices and resources](#)

[Funding Announcement](#)

[In the news](#)

[Training opportunity](#)

Welcome to Health Equity

Val Thomas-Matson
Coordinator | Healthy King County Coalition

The goal for infusing the topic of equity throughout this month's newsletter is to further the work of CTG from the "concept" of equity to a "recognized" equitable reality. Most will agree enthusiastically that equity is important, and a good idea. However, too often we have no way to facilitate fostering that intention. Why does equity sound good? And, for many of us, why does equity remain a challenging concept?

In future issues, we will continue to include articles, tools and data to inspire further equitable access to physical activity, culturally appropriate healthy foods, and smoke-free living for a healthier King County community transformation.

If you have ideas for ways to feature the topic of equity in future newsletters, contact Yalonda Speaks at yalonda.speaks@seattlechildrens.org.

Spotlight on best practices and resources

A June [webinar](#), hosted by PolicyLink, focused on why equity is critical to health impact assessment policies and highlighted specific strategies to implement and ensure equity. Richmond, CA's bike, pedestrian and park plans; and the Twin Cities' light rail plans were featured as success stories.

The American Public Health Association hosted a [webinar](#) in July about neighborhood planning through a health equity lens. This webinar featured success stories about public health and planning in Fort Worth, Texas and Seattle.

You can watch archived versions of each webinar by clicking on the links above.

Funding Announcement

Funding is available to supply signage that helps enforce 100% smoke-free and 100% tobacco-free parks. Tobacco use in parks sends a

Community Transformation Grant (CTG)

Seattle Children's Hospital

Seattle Children's Hospital, in partnership with Public Health - Seattle & King County and the Healthy King County Coalition, received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement policy and system changes that can prevent obesity and tobacco use among children and families living in South Seattle and South King County-which was designated as a priority population area. We are working with many community partners to increase access to healthy foods, promote physical activity and smoke free living, and make fair and equitable choices that lead to better health accessible to all. Our collaboration of efforts will help to build healthier communities.

In this newsletter, we interviewed a few CTG partners about equity. Read on to learn how they incorporate equity in their work.

Equity works

A spotlight on Matias Valenzuela's health equity work at King County

Matias Valenzuela has been at Public Health - Seattle & King County since 2000. For many years, he worked in communications and health education; now he focuses on community engagement and partnerships as manager for Community Engagement & Partnerships. He works with the Public Health staff and divisions as well as community organizations to make sure the department is effectively partnering with groups and listening to residents.

"We need to constantly be on the ground-with our feet and ears-or else we are not addressing the real issues and concerns in the community," says Valenzuela.

In addition to his work with community engagement and partnerships, he also manages the county-wide work on the Equity & Social Justice, working closely with the King County Executive's office and a great cross-branch leadership team.

dangerous message to youth that using tobacco is consistent with a healthy environment. Studies have shown that children and youth exposed to smoking and tobacco use are more likely to use tobacco products when they get older. Tobacco-free parks also align with Washington state policy that all school grounds (including playfields) must be tobacco-free; and many parks are either adjacent to or shared by schools.

[Funding is available](#) for agencies working in King County with priority for communities in South King County. Please click the link or contact Scott Neal at scott.neal@kingcounty.gov for more information.

In the news:

A selection of local and national stories relevant to HEAL and tobacco prevention

Local/state:

[City of SeaTac funded to study light rail](#)

[Seattle embraces idea of Cherry Street bike-lane buffer](#)

[Restaurants' nutrition labels: How big an impact?](#)

[Hospitals go farm-fresh](#)



King County's Equity & Social Justice's inter-branch team
Their work includes equity tool development, employee and community engagement, training, and implementing department and countywide strategies.

What did health equity look like when you started in Public Health, how has it evolved?

Early on, Public Health focused more on health disparities and diversity. Thankfully, as part of local and national dialogues, the conversation has progressed and we are aiming to address more of the root causes of problems. By thinking about health equity as well as social justice, we are seeing the differences in population outcomes as fundamentally structural and unfair. We see it as our responsibility to address these inequities through our organizational decisions, practices and engagement of community.

At King County we have come a long way since we first launched [Equity and Social Justice](#) in 2008, but we still have a long way to go. Creating a more equitable county is not a one-time activity, it's a long-term process.

The only way we are going to make sustained and lasting change is if we try to integrate an equity lens into all that we do. In

National:

[How guerilla gardening can save America's food deserts](#)

[People Want Schools to Help Prevent Childhood Obesity, Survey Says](#)

[WHO Urges Tougher Food Marketing Rules to Curb Childhood Obesity](#)

[Michelle Obama, Keynote Speaker At NCLR, Discusses Obesity Among Hispanic Children](#)

[Successful Community Transformation Grants show importance of public health funding](#)

[Neighborhood planning increases impact of Community Transformation Grants](#)

[Why Healthy Eaters Fall for Fries](#)

[New food bike provides Lexington kids with healthier options](#)

[NYC Doctors Are Now Prescribing Fruits And Veggies](#)

[Fitness now front and center in Mullica Township](#)

[Updated Nutrition Standards for School Snacks and Drinks: A Momentous Step toward a Healthier Future for Millions of Children](#)

King County, we have aimed to do that through our county's strategic plan and our ordinance on equity and social justice. It's our job to be a champion for equity and provide the tools for all employees and partners to create a different and better county.

How do you use an equity lens to inform your planning and decision making process?

As a start, we need to fully understand how some communities are disadvantaged and we need to focus our attention on those with the greatest needs and lack of opportunity. Then, our challenge is to make sure an equity lens is used in everything that we do, and that it is a conscious and intentional process. We need to consistently stop and ask questions that assure low-income communities and communities of color are benefitting from our decisions and actions, and if they are not, let's change what we are doing. Also, we need to ask-who are we including and excluding as part of our process? Essentially, it's about continuously learning, not conforming and willing to do things differently and better.

Highlights from the field

Amy Kindell

Aquatics Program Specialist | Tukwila Pool

How do you incorporate equity into your daily work?

Our daily work is about equity in so many ways. We address equity in the areas of health, wellness, recreation, access, cultural and gender equity. Most people wouldn't think of a little municipal swimming pool addressing all these issues but really it is so much more than just a place to come have a good time.

In our community, we serve populations that have high risk for drowning with swimming lessons, as well as with low impact recreation opportunities and fun that address the high incidence of obesity and related illnesses. Poverty is a huge factor in our community, and we've begun to address this with our 3rd grade swimming lesson voucher program that gives every 3rd grader in the community an opportunity to take a session of swimming lessons at no cost. Additionally, we are in the process of developing a no-cost program for young people who would like to become lifeguards. We are also addressing access through programming that is responsive to specific groups' cultural needs such as single gender offerings. As well as developing a translation policy so we can get information about our health and safety opportunities out to families that may not speak or read English.

[Healthy Bargains: Fruits and Vegetables are Nutritious and Economical](#)

[Obesity rates decline among low-income preschoolers after rising for decades](#)

Training opportunity

Puget Sound Equity Summit-
Save the date!

The Regional Equity Network and partners are planning a [Puget Sound Equity Summit November 8 and 9, 2013](#) (an evening launch event and Saturday summit) at Highline Community College.

Community convenings leading up to the Equity Summit are underway. Community-based organizations [can apply for up to \\$1,200](#) to convene their community and articulate key priorities and opportunities they wish to move forward and/or highlight at the Summit.



Young swimmers at the Tukwila Pool during open swim!

We see the impact of increasing equity every day. Whether it is young immigrants who use the pool for the first time or women who attend our single gender programming-we are seeing whole micro-communities begin to feel at home using our facility for education, health and wellness, and recreation.

How will your agency know that it is doing equitable work, or what will their work, to foster equitable choices look like, at the end of this CTG grant?

By the end of the grant, we will have policies in place that support the work we are doing to address equity and access. In developing those policies, we are excited for the opportunity to educate our elected officials and community about the work we are doing, and why it is so important to the health wellness and vitality of our community.

Zak deGorgue
Services & Communications Manager | Renton Housing Authority (RHA)

How do you incorporate equity into your daily work?

Renton Housing Authority's mission throughout all of its programming is to provide opportunity to those in need. Whether that takes place in the physical home, through self-sufficiency programming, or health conscious policy, the goal is the same; providing a healthy and safe environment to raise a family or age in place. The Community Transformation Grant exemplifies this very same strategy, and highlights the importance of health conscious policy in the built environment.

RHA has found the key to incorporating equity throughout our policy making process, is to fully communicate with our residents and provide a genuinely democratic process throughout implementation. Our goal is to create a healthier environment for our community, but in order for this to be truly successful, the residents must be the driving force of change, not the institution; our job is to provide the opportunity for change. By communicating with and incorporating our residents through every step of the process, including hiring our coordinator, policy development, and numerous community and individual meetings, the community will be as invested in the policy as is RHA.

How will your agency know that it is doing equitable work, or what will their work, to foster equitable choices look like, at the end of this CTG grant?

In the end, RHA will measure its success the same way it forms policy, through expanded opportunity and choices and resident satisfaction. If a child being raised in an RHA property has the same opportunity to live in as healthy of an environment as a more affluent child in another neighborhood; and at the same time, our residents have the opportunity to continue making decisions for themselves, then we will know we have accomplished our goal. The key to this is proper communication and education so all parties involved understands the needs of each other and the community.

Jennifer Trott

Associate Director | Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition

How do you incorporate equity into your daily work?

For many health campaigns, there's a natural inclination to design your message, materials, and even your logo at the very start. In our work educating King County residents on the benefits of healthy beverages we made a conscience decision NOT to make any assumptions about communities that we had little or no experience working with yet.

For example, we refrained from translating our materials before we had the input of communities representing various languages and cultures. We even accepted that some organizations and communities might choose a different campaign name, depending upon what had the most meaning and recognition to them.

When you begin every project with equity as a goal, you can help ensure that it's woven throughout your design and approach. Additionally, when you have community buy-in and involvement, your health education work is much more likely to have a real impact.

How will your agency know that it is doing equitable work, or what will their work, to foster equitable choices look like, at the end of this CTG grant?

At the end of this grant, we hope to see a variety of communities, organizations, and individuals hearing our messages and making changes in daily drinking habits. If change can only be seen in one population or place, we know that we haven't truly engaged King County residents equitably.

A look at life expectancies in South King County

Medina Khedir

Intern | Seattle Children's

My name is Medina Khedir, I am an 18-year-old freshman attending the University of Washington. Many individuals living in South King County want to know, what's my life expectancy? How long will I live?

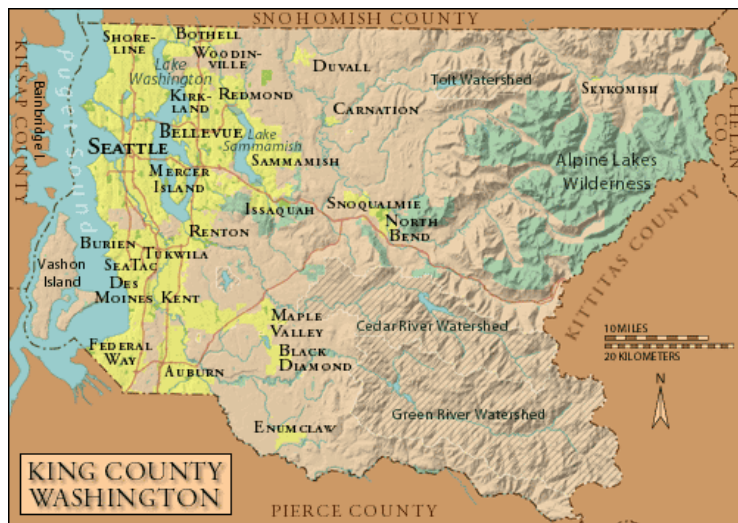
In reading: "[Achieving individual health through community investment: A perspective from King County, Washington by Dr. David W. Fleming](#)," I learned that the chance of many South King County residents living past their late 70s is unlikely. Dr. Fleming states in his article, *"In 2007, the top 10 countries had an average life expectancy of 82 years. In contrast, the life expectancy in the United States was four years lower, 78 years-the same as these other countries had been 16 years before."*

A city health profile is a Public Health report that provides information on health indicators and their determinants. In reading King County's city health profiles, I learned many cities in King County are above the borderline when it comes to individuals living with high obesity rates and tobacco use which are two of the leading causes of death in our area. There are many reasons that South King County residents have shorter life expectancies. Some include obesity rates, tobacco use, poverty/low income, underemployment, environmental and other social factors. Together, these factors can lead to lower quality of life and reduce overall life expectancy.

How do we address these issues on a local level? To every problem, there is a solution!

1. Be a voice, be a health champion and go out and support causes in your neighborhood that lead to building healthier communities.
2. Encourage your peers to make healthy choices about their activities, habits and diets.
3. Ask your school leaders or employer to provide more bike racks; create neighborhood walking/biking path maps for your family, co-workers and friends; and create a list of local swimming pools and community centers.
4. Build community gardens and hold monthly community dinners with the healthy foods you harvest.

Visit [King County City Health Profiles](#) and [King County Community Health Indicators](#) websites to learn more about the health of South King County residents.



Map of King County

Links

South Seattle and South King County CTG Grant:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/partnerships/CTG.aspx>

Healthy King County Coalition: www.healthykingcounty.org/

Seattle Children's: www.seattlechildrens.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CTG: www.cdc.gov/communitytransformation/

Washington State Department of Health's CTG project:

www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/HealthyCommunitiesWashington/TransformingWashingtonCommunities.aspx

Tacoma -Pierce County Health Department CTG project:

www.tpchd.org/environment/community-transformation/

About CTG in King County

Transforming the Health of South Seattle and South King County is a collaborative effort to change systems so all residents can be physically active, have access to healthy foods and drinks and live in tobacco-free environments.

If you have any questions or want more information about CTG, contact Lindsey Greto, CTG program manager at lindsey.greto@seattlechildrens.org.